DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 293 288 EC 202 487

AUTHOR Mannix, Darlene S.
TITLE I CAN BEHAVE: A Social Skills Program for Teaching Classroom Behaviors to Elementary Children.
PUB DATE 86
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Council for Exceptional Children (65th, Chicago, IL, April 20-24, 1987).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Class Activities; Curriculum Development; Elementary Education; *Emotional Disturbances; *Interpersonal Competence; Social Adjustment; Socialization; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

The development of a social skills curriculum for elementary-age emotionally disturbed children is described. Based on classroom observations leading to a list of 20 behaviors considered important for classroom adjustment and learning success (e.g., sitting still in a group, not disturbing others, and working independently), the program consists of 20 units. Designed to be presented on a weekly basis, each unit focuses on a particular behavior and includes the following components: (1) an introductory story; (2) a one-sentence definition or rule that defines or explains the appropriate behavior; (3) a rationale for working on the identified behavior; (4) worksheet objectives and general classroom objectives; and (5) student worksheets containing examples of students experiencing situations typical of classrooms in which the appropriate behavior would be expected. Students receive points for participating in the social skills group and for their performance on the worksheet. The program was subsequently field tested in both regular and special education classrooms. Now in its published form, the curriculum consists of 50 worksheets, 11 original stories, a teacher's manual with daily lesson plans, and a pre/posttest and placement inventory. (JW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED293288

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

I CAN BEHAVE:

A Social Skills Program for Teaching Classroom Behaviors to Elementary Children

Darlene Mannix
151 Orchard Avenue
LaPorte, IN 46350
219 324-5827

EC 202487

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Darlene S. Mannix
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Council for Exceptional Children (65th, Chicago, IL, April 20-24, 1987)

ICAN BEHAVE: A Social Skills Program for Teaching Classroom Behaviors to Elementary Children

I. Background/Reason for Development

The author of the program was looking for a challenging class to teach, and found that challenge in an elementary classroom for emotionally disturbed children. Eight boys, ranging from first to fifth grade, composed the class, housed in a trailer in a rural part of Virginia.

As is typical of most classes of emotionally disturbed students, the area of social skills training was felt to be at least as important in terms of instruction for these students as that of the more typical elementary curricula such as reading or math. While various social skills programs and techniques had been attempted with the class and a moderate degree of success had been reached, various problems arose and remained which made the use of existing materials ineffective or difficult. These problems included the use of materials that were too difficult conceptually for elementary students, uninteresting to the students in terms of content or activities, or prohibitively expensive or unwieldly for a little country classroom.

Working with a consultant from the local mental health department, the teacher set up a rudimentary social skills class for the students. During this time, one specific behavior would be taught using an array of materials and ideas, and that behavior would be reinforced throughout the day.

Although this was recognized as a good first step, and the goals for the social skills class were clearly identified, other problems arose. These included inconsistent allottment of instructional time for social skills training due to demands from other subject areas, difficulty maintaining student attention in a group, little emphasis on student accountability for learning the material presented, and short-lived behavior change on the part of the students.

To counteract these obstacles, a program was devised specifically for these students with a framework of several overriding objectives: (1) the behaviors targeted should be those most often occurring in the classroom, or those behaviors which the teacher felt would be most beneficial to the students in hopes of possible mainstreaming; (2) the students should view the subject matter as seriously as they viewed their other academic subjects; thus, the students should be required to respond to items or examples on worksheets similar in appearance to those of their other academic subjects; (3) the worksheet examples should contain numerous examples of both positive and negative classroom behaviors, and offer an opportunity for examining why a behavior is either appropriate or inappropriate in a given situation; (4) the students should be given an opportunity to discuss situations and even memorize key elements of the content taught; and (5) the materials should be interesting, humorous, and applicable to real-life situations for the students, and organized and easy to use for the teacher.

II. Procedure

Content:

The students were observed for several days by the classroom teacher, who subsequently compiled a list of 20 behaviors thought to be most

important in terms of maximizing student learning and success in the classroom. This list included such behaviors as doing careful work, working independently, sitting still in a group, not disturbing others, and handling classroom frustrations appropriately.

Materials:

During the remainder of the school year and over the summer, twenty units were developed by the classroom teacher for use in the class the following year. Each unit focused on one particular behavior and included the following components: (1) a story specifically written to emphasize the target behavior and to introduce the unit. Each story typically dealt with a student or class experiencing some sort of behavior problem in the classroom or at school. The problem was either resolved or suggestions were presented for consideration by the students. (2) a one-sentence definition or rule that defined or explained appropriate behavior. This rule was to serve as a common denominator for the students and teacher to refer to when classroom infractions occurred, as well as to guide them through completing the worksheet activities. (3) a rationale that explained why the particular behavior was worth working on in terms of student improvement and teacher time. For students to want to change their behavior, they first must see some worthwhile aspect in putting forth the effort. (4) objectives, both for the worksheets and for general classroom use. Worksheet objectives primarily involved identifying appropriate or inappropriate behaviors under contrived conditions. Classroom objectives were more general in scope, and specified what behavioral outcomes were to be strived for throughout the day. (5) worksheets for the students

containing examples of students in school experiencing situations typical of classrooms in which a specific behavior would be expected.

Use of the Materials:

The program was set up on a one-unit-per-week basis. On the first day of the unit, the teacher would read the story to the students and highlight the problem to be considered and to orient student thinking toward alternative behaviors. The rule was presented to the students, displayed prominantly in the room, discussed in a group, and was required to be written and often memorized by the students. As the problem behavior occurred throughout the day, the teacher referred to the rule and handled situations by asking students to recall discussions about the behavior in question and alternative behaviors which had been noted. On each of the following five days, one worksheet was presented to the students involving the target behavior. The worksheets required a written response from each student, and then were discussed and/or graded. Points were also given to students on the basis of their participation in the social skills group and performance on the worksheet. Thus all students were involved in the activity simultaneously, were required to participate for a grade, and were evaluated in terms of their performance.

Students enjoyed the stories and were able to identify specific students and incidents from them. This provided a meaningful time of discussion about events in a neutral setting, as it was less threatening or heated to talk about conflict in terms of a fictional character. Most students were able to memorize the rule quickly, and were periodically asked to recall the rule during each day. Writing the rule became part of

their daily morning boardwork. The class as a whole became more cooperative in terms of complying with teacher requests both during social skills time and throughout the day. They were more likely to recall discussions about a behavior and the conclusions reached within the group. Specific incidents of improved behavior among students were also noted.

III. Program Evaluation and Present Status

This program was used in the elementary ED classroom for which it was originally developed for one year. The following year, it was used with learning disabled children and regular first and second grade classes. Teachers at that time reported positive student feelings towards the materials, as well as improved student attention during social skills time, involved discussion, relevance of the content, ease of grading or documenting responses as an evaluation procedure for students, and ease of preparation. Student change in terms of improved classroom behavior had been reported anecdotally.

After being accepted for publication by the ASIEP Education Company, Portland, Oregon, the program was field tested in 19 classrooms with 169 students. The classes included both regular education classes ranging from kindergarten to fifth grade, and special education classes of elementary LD, ED, and language disordered children. A pre/posttest was developed for each of the four major sections of the program, as well as a placement inventory to determine overall teacher perceptions of their class's needs. To broaden the scope of appeal to non- or poor readers, an artist worked closely with the author to convey situations using picture clues.

The field test was conducted in order to provide documentation about the use of the entire curriculum across settings. Three components were involved: teacher rating of the program; pre/post pupil assessment of students' behavior change; and the classroom inventory (demonstrating a relationship in students' improved behavior associated with the instructional unit in which they participated). Results showed an overwhelmingly positive response by teachers to the program, substantial knowledge acquisition as measured by the pre/posttest, improved behavior as evaluated by teachers on a separate social skills rating scale, and a statistically significant improvement in student behavior in three of the four sections of the program.

The program in its marketed form includes 50 worksheets compiled into a student workbook; 11 original stories which correspond to the ten units which were ultimately selected for includion in the program; a teacher's manual with daily lesson plans, answers, and field test information; and a pre/posttest and placement inventory.